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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KUWAIT 000991

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/IR, NEA/NGA, NEA/ARP

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SUBJECT: (SBU) AMBASSADOR BRIEFS SENIOR GOK OFFICIALS ON  
IRAQ

Classified By: CDA FRANK URBANCIC; REASON: 1.4 (D)

**1. (C) INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY:** In his capacity as CPA Deputy Administrator, Ambassador Jones held separate meetings in Kuwait on March 20 with Shaykh Sabah al-Khalid, Chairman of Kuwait's National Security Bureau; Shaykh Nasser Sabah al-Ahmed, son of the Prime Minister; and Shaykh Nasser Mohammed, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, to brief them on developments in Iraq. He stressed that the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) was a genuinely Iraqi product (all but a few of its 62 articles were written by Iraqis), noting that the IGC members have begun to understand that democracy requires compromise and must not only ensure majority rule, but also protection of minority rights. He thought it likely that we would seek another UNSCR in support of the Iraqi political process, perhaps in May. He also described progress in decentralizing governance and in strengthening control of Iraq's borders. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

(SBU) SHAYKH SABAH AL-KHALID

**2. (C) TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY:** Shaykh Sabah al-Khalid said "you can see in the eyes of Kuwaitis a big change in one year" (i.e. liberation of Iraq, capture of Saddam). He added "We understand the difficulties, but we are seeing a difference in all fields in Iraq, and in Iran, Syria, Sudan, and Libya -- things are changing." He asked about the degree of sovereignty the Iraqi government would have on July 1, and prospects for another UNSCR. He noted Iraqi Sunni Arabs' complaints of being ignored. The Ambassador explained that Iraq has not ceased to be a sovereign nation; CPA will transfer full remaining governmental authority on June 30. He observed that the Iraqi people themselves want some constraints on the interim government, since it will be unelected.

**3. (C) BORDER:** The Ambassador said the Coalition was working on securing Iraq's borders; this work had acquired increased urgency after the Ashura atrocities left the population in an uproar. New entry posts were being built and equipped so they could take photographs of all who enter and issue some kind of document to them. Already, there were 8,000 trained border guards, and the target was to triple that number within a year. Visa instructions were being issued to permit legitimate visits of pilgrims and others, up to a maximum daily number. The Syrian border was pretty well controlled on the Iraqi side already. The biggest gap was the Iranian border, which was largely uncontrolled. Henceforth, traffic to/from Iran will be funneled through three entry posts.

**4. (C) UN INVOLVEMENT:** The UN plans to open offices in Baghdad, Mosul and Basra. It already has offices in Cyprus and Jordan to support Iraq, and is considering Kuwait as well. The USG may seek another UNSCR around May, the Ambassador said, to endorse the legitimacy of the interim Iraqi government and reaffirm support for the political process. In addition, TAL Article 59 calls for Iraqi participation in the multinational force (MNF) to be created under UNSCR 1511. Operational paragraph 13 of that UNSCR envisages the MNF remaining in place until the political process is complete. This process is laid out in OP 7, which refers to the election of a new Iraqi government under a permanent constitution. In the U.S. view, these two paragraphs and Article 59 provide a strong legal basis for the MNF. Nonetheless, some MNF member countries might wish to see further clarification of the MNF in an additional UNSCR.

**5. (C) SISTANI:** Sabah al-Khalid said that Grand Ayatollah Sistani's son Mohammed Ridha and a son-in-law are more engaged than he is in politics. The Ambassador confirmed that the son appears very actively engaged and may be encouraging greater activity on the part of his father, who unfortunately refuses to meet with CPA officials. Sistani's influence is strong, but not decisive even among all Shia. People often try to speak in his name, but he occasionally slaps them down. Overall, he has probably been more helpful than not in maintaining order.

**6. (C) MOQTADA SADR:** In response to a comment from Sabah al-Khalid, the Ambassador described Moqtada Sadr as very

irresponsible, believed to have ordered the Khoei murder. His credibility was plummeting as the people realized his agenda was just to seek power. Nonetheless, his Jaish al-Mahdi had grown from 3-500 to 2-3,000, which gave him power. It was not clear who was funding it -- perhaps Iran, perhaps illegitimate businesses and revenue from his control of the Kufa mosque.

17. (C) KUWAIT: After expressing great appreciation for Kuwait's support, the Ambassador noted that it would be helpful for Kuwait to open its embassy in Baghdad. It would have to pay close attention to security, but "you don't want to be the last Arab country to have diplomatic relations." Shaykh Sabah al-Khalid confirmed that the GOK wanted its relations with Iraq to be "second to none" among Arab countries.

(SBU) SHAYKH NASSER SABAH  
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18. (C) GOVERNANCE: In addition to repeating much of the same briefing, the Ambassador described to Shaykh Nasser Sabah al-Ahmed the progress achieved in governance: CPA now has offices in all provincial capitals and is allocating money to provincial councils so they learn to make budgetary decisions themselves. Iraqis enjoy participating in governance -- voting, discussing, etc. -- and exchange views very politely. CPA is committed to a real process and will pay close heed to what the UN recommends. The interim government should be formed by early June, if possible, so it has time to get organized by June 30.

19. (C) KURDS: The Ambassador said the Kurds understand that it is in their interest to be part of a strong Iraq, with a fair role. The TAL recognizes the Kurds' gains of the past twelve years, and extends protection for their rights as well as for those of other communities.

110. (C) ELECTRICITY: The Ambassador confessed he was a bit puzzled by the GOK's slow response to a US company's initiative to supply electric power to southern Iraq via Kuwait by: building transmission lines, buying 200 MW from Kuwait and sending it north, while building a 1,000 MW power plant to be run on Iraqi gas. Shaykh Nasser commented that the Prime Minister (his father) did not understand the project properly. He asked for a short description of the project in writing, and promised to present it to his father. Replying to the Ambassador's mention of the Prime Minister's apparent concern that a future Iraqi government could somehow lay claim to the plant, Shaykh Nasser commented that the involvement of a US investor would protect the project.

111. (C) STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS: Shaykh Nasser said the GOK is moving ahead with construction of a harbor on Bubiyan island, has formed a high-level Development and Planning Council, and is enthusiastic about its strategic partnership with the US. The Ambassador saw good progress in the signing of a bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with Kuwait, designation of Kuwait as a Major Non-NATO Ally, and the upcoming bilateral Joint Military Commission. GOK liberalization of investment rules and visa issuance would be helpful steps.

112. (C) LOOTED ART: Shaykh Nasser (a world-class art collector), informed the Ambassador that "all" the looted Iraqi art recovered in Kuwait was fake. It turned out that the Metropolitan Museum in New York had a lot of the best pieces, as part of an exhibit on the three ancient cities of Akkad, Ashur and Babel.

(SBU) SHAYKH NASSER MOHAMMED  
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113. (C) TAL: The Ambassador expressed thanks for Kuwait's strong partnership on Iraq, and hoped the Arab League Summit (Tunis, March 29-30) would produce a statement of support for the Iraqi political process. He repeated to Shaykh Nasser Mohammed much of his earlier briefings on the TAL, governance, and border security. He explained the specific point that had caused delay in signing the TAL: adoption of the permanent constitution will fail if two-thirds of the voters reject it in any three provinces. Shaykh Nasser appreciated this information which he agreed should be distributed more widely to offset negative messages on the Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya satellite TV stations: "Sistani is against" the TAL, "there is chaos in Iraq now8, Iraqis are struggling against &U.S. imperial occupation8, etc.

114. (C) INTERIM GOVERNMENT: The Ambassador said there was a wide-range of options for interim government (IG), which would take power on June 30. Most Iraqis he had talked to preferred an IG that was more broadly representative than the current Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). Most Iraqis also do not want religious or ethnic based government. The IGC could be broadened on geographic and professional bases through involvement of the provincial councils and professional

associations, to which doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. must belong in order to practice the relevant profession. The IG's main purpose will be to prepare elections, which cannot be held before end 2004 but must be held by January 31, 2005; the resulting transitional government will draft the permanent constitution and prepare elections for the permanent government by end 2005. The UN will see whether the ration-card records can serve as electoral rolls; such issues should be decided by May 2004, as it takes eight months to prepare elections.

15. (C) TERRORISTS: Asked who is behind the terrorist bombings in Iraq, the Ambassador said Zarqawi's group is most likely. We caught one of Zarqawi's couriers in possession of a CD that contained a letter outlining a strategy to incite sectarian violence between the Shia and Sunnis. The document also credibly claimed responsibility for 25 bombings. Most foreign terrorists probably enter from Syria; and come from Sudan, Syria, Saudi Arabia ) so far, only one was Kuwaiti. Shaykh Nasser guessed he was a member of the Ajmi tribe (plural: Ajman) -- "most extremists are Ajmi." It is not clear whether Syria is actively supporting terrorists, but it is certainly not doing all it can do to stop them. The Ambassador recounted Iraqi FM Zeibari's remark to him that Syria's effective control of its border used to make life very hard for him in previous career as a Kurdish smuggler.

16. (C) IRAN: Iran is building intelligence networks everywhere in Iraq, but is not yet stirring things up, said the Ambassador. It is clearly biding its time and preparing for long-term influence.

17. (C) SADDAM: He is in Iraq, held in isolation, and treated according to the rules, the Ambassador said. We captured a lot of information along with him. His supporters are much weakened; nothing is heard anymore about Hizb al-Awda (Party of the Return). It is unclear whether Izzat al-Douri is alive. Shaykh Nasser dismissed al-Douri as "not at all important." On the other hand, Shaykh Nasser was unhappy that the Coalition had let Saadoun al-Hamadi and Mohammed al-Sahhaf go free: Hammadi had committed crimes, and Sahhaf murdered a prostitute, according to press reports.

18. (C) SECURITY: The Ambassador said the Coalition had destroyed enormous quantities of weapons, but staggering amounts remained. In reply to Shaykh Nasser's questioning, he said all heavy equipment, long-range, missiles/launchers, and military airplanes had been destroyed. 36 battalions of Civil Defense Corps and 3 Army battalions exist now; the goal is to increase both figures substantially. Some officers who had broken with the former regime years ago may return to duty. About 70 percent of the new security forces are ex-army. The IGC across the board is leery of any army role in internal security. The Ambassador thought Iraq would be quite stable within a few years. There had already been a noticeable decline in attacks on Coalition forces since the November 15 agreement and the December capture of Saddam. Unfortunately, terrorists were now focusing on soft, civilian targets with increasingly deadly effect.

19. (C) UTILITIES: Water supply exceeds the pre-war level. Baghdad has about 18 hours/day of electricity; total electrical output is higher than before the war, and distribution is more equitable now. Nation-wide, supply is still about 2,000 MW short of demand. Basra has electricity about 23 hours/day, because much less of Basra's power is being sent north than before. (A desire to keep power in the Basra area, where it is generated, may explain much of the sabotage of transmission lines carrying power north.) The Ambassador noted that the Prime Minister had promised Secretary of State Powell earlier that day that he would ask

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the Minister of Energy to look into provision of electricity to Iraq. A US company had submitted all the required forms for a power project as an investment. The Ambassador had just that afternoon briefed Commerce Minister Abdullah al-Taweel, who said he had not seen the application. It seemed that July was the earliest that 200 MW of power from Kuwait could start to flow to Iraq, and it was urgently needed. In reply to the Ambassador's request for help, Shaykh Nasser promised to call al-Taweel.

20. (C) IRAQI OIL: The Iraqi/Turkey line is again flowing oil at a modest rate; Iraq signed contracts to export 6 million barrels of oil from the Turkish part of Ceyhan last week. Most oil exports are going through Fao and Basra. Production is now about 2.5 million bpd -- nearly the same level as pre-war -- of which less than 2 mbpd is exported.

21. (C) BIAP: Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) now has about 25 non-military charter flights/week. The Coalition will soon begin to move military operations out of BIAP, which may help reduce the security threat there.

122. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.  
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